

Text: Hebrews 10.14  
St Stephen's

March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008  
Good Friday

## The Accomplishment of the Cross

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, it changed the world.  
What did he accomplish on that cross? **Two headlines...**

### The Cross is the Way Of Life...

We instinctively believe life lies in a certain direction, 'up' – as in 'up the ladder'. We have an almost incurable instinct to climb **up the ladder**, and we believe that after a lot of hard work, what's at the top is expanded opportunities, well deserved rewards, and a real sense of purpose and value in life. We have **words that describe the journey up the ladder**... "hard work", "career opportunity", "upwardly mobile", "success", "pride", "achieve", "earn", "deserve"... Dallas Willard calls it "the human project". That is his phrase for our attempts to **take charge of the world**. The Bible calls it "**works**". We think it is the path to a rewarding life, so we climb.

But the Bible would question an "up-the-ladder" approach to life. God says **every time you go up the ladder, you're in increasingly dangerous territory** when it comes to your spiritual and relational health. On the way up the ladder you begin to wonder why all the other people aren't as **smart** as you are, and **everyone is judged** by their capacity to help you rise. Maybe you find you don't need your **spouse**. You find you **don't have much time** for your kids anymore. Because it's all about getting up the ladder.

The Bible does far more than warn about the journey up the ladder. The central theme of the Bible is all about **a different journey**, a journey **down the ladder**... we call that journey "**the incarnation**".

The clearest passage in the NT about **the journey down the ladder** was penned by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 2...

*[He] did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being*

*made in human likeness.*

Php 2:6-7

You remember his birth... likely in a **cave**, used as a barn, and he was laid in a **manger**. That's all there is. **The Son of God steps down.**

Within his first years he becomes a **refugee** in Egypt, running for his little life from a crazed King Herod. He would spend 80% of his years on earth in a small, out-of-the-way city named **Nazareth**, a **common** Galilean city.

Where does he go from there?

*taking the very nature of a servant,*

Php 2:7

He **has time** for people whom everyone else has given up on. Little children and blind men and desperate parents and hungry rabbis and broken women and hard working businessmen. They flock to him because he stepped down...

So finally, at the end of the three years, **into Jerusalem** he comes. And now the final step is in sight.

*he humbled himself*

*and became obedient to death—*

*even death on a cross!*

Php 2:8

He has laid aside his glory and his power. He "*empties himself*", the scriptures say. He has poured it all out, given it all up, stepped all the way down.

**The direction of real life is down.** As in

*'love one another as I have loved you',*

*'It is better to give than to receive'*

*'the first shall be last and the last shall be first',*

*'blessed are the poor in spirit',*

*'take up your cross and follow me'...*

*he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

**"The cross says what a thing really is."** Put something next to the cross, and you see it for what it is. The cross **exposes** everything. The cross is **God's judgment on the 'up the ladder' life**. Just put the two next to each other and look for yourself.

## **His Cross is the Source of Life**

Hebrews chs 9-10 are two stunning chapters. In them there is a detailed comparison between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, between the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish temple and the sacrifice of Jesus in the cross.

### **The Old is...**

Temporary and provisional  
Bulls and goats  
External only  
Repeated  
Reminds of sin

### **The New is...**

permanent  
the blood of the son  
cleanses the heart  
'Once for all'  
brings forgiveness of sin

*He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place **once for all** by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.*

Hebrews 9:12 (NIV)

*Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself **again and again**, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place **every year** with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer **many times** since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared **once for all** at the end of the ages to **do away with sin** by the sacrifice of himself.*

Hebrews 9:25-26 (NIV)

*so Christ was **sacrificed once** to take away the sins of many people;*

Hebrews 9:28 (NIV)

*we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all. Day after day** every priest stands and performs his religious duties; **again and again** he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered **for all time one sacrifice** for sins, he **sat down** at the right hand of God.*

Hebrews 10:10-12 (NIV)

"*It is finished*" is the phrase he speaks from the cross. Only a single word in Greek, we translate it with three: "*It is finished*". I like Eugene Peterson's translation, "*It's done... complete*"

Note that it was not after his birth or his teaching or his miracles or his casting out of demons that he said, "It is finished." He said it **at his sacrifice!**

He did not wait until his resurrection, until his ascension, or until he sent the Spirit upon his believers to speak this word! He said it **at his sacrifice!**

There seems to be no avoiding it; in the mind of Jesus, and in the mind of God, His sacrifice is the **centerpiece** of our salvation. **Our salvation rests upon a finished work if it rests on the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. If you try and anchor it anywhere else, you build on sand.**

*He sacrificed himself once and for all, summing up all the other sacrifices in this sacrifice of himself, the final solution of sin.* Heb 9:26 (Msg)

**Your failures do not have to be fatal.** Not if you bring them to the

CROSS.

- **Where is your forgiveness?** If it is in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross for you, it is finished. You cannot add to it. No one can take it from you!
- **Where is your peace?** If it is in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for you, it will be there in storm and tempest, in cyclone and gale, beyond all your understanding it will be there, finished, complete.

*He has done this through the death on the cross of his own human body, and now as a result Christ has **brought you into the very presence of God**, and you are **standing there before him with nothing left against you**—nothing left that he could even chide you for... Col 1:22 (LB)*

## **The Cross is the Way Of Life... His Cross is the Source of Life**

Tim Keller  
The Sacrifice

The Blood represents the life. If there is no blood, there is no life. "The shedding of blood" means the redemptive power of self sacrifice.

The old myths tell of the gods who demanded human sacrifice in order to have their anger assuaged. Is that who God is?

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.  
Hebrews 9:12 (NIV)

This is the opposite of the old religions. "The church of God which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20)

Bonhoffer: "If you have ever really forgiven someone you know that all forgiveness is suffering". If someone has wronged you deeply, there is an indelible sense of debt. You can make the perpetrator pay. Or you can forgive. If you make him pay, the evil passes into you and you become judgmental, hardened, cruel, merciless.

If you pay, it means letting his sin go, not slicing him up before other people, not putting pins in his doll, not trash talking him – releasing him. You will suffer. It is agony and thorns and nails.... It is a cross. Forgiveness means suffering. Only then can you face him and love him.

How much more is this true with God?

'Under the Mercy' – Charles Williams' tombstone